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THE EDUCATION OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN

Paper Offered By

Hazel Roberts

as fulfilling the requirements

for the

DEGREE OF MASTER OF SCIENCE IN EDUCATION

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THE EDUCATION OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN

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by

Hazel Roberts

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## INTRODUCTION

Some biographers have over emphasized Lincoln's early ignorance and lack of opportunity. Lincoln, himself, also emphasized his humble beginning and his lack of schooling. In a sketch written for Mr. Jesse W. Fell, December 20, 1859, Mr. Lincoln speaking of Indiana schools said:

There were some schools, so called; but no qualification was ever required of a teacher beyond "readin', writin', and cipherin'" to the Rule of Three . . . . There was absolutely nothing to excite ambition for education. Ofcourse when I came of age I did not know much. Still, somehow, I could read, write, and cipher to the Rule of Three; but that was all. I have not been to school since. The little advance I now have upon this store of education, I have picked up from time to time under the pressure of necessity.<sup>1</sup>

In an autobiography written in the third person June, 1860, Lincoln stated:

While here (in Indiana), Abraham (the future President) went to A B C schools by littles . . . . Abraham now thinks that the aggregate of all his schooling did not amount to one year. He was never in a college or academy as a student, and never inside of a college or academy building till since he had a law license. What he has in the way of education he has picked up.<sup>2</sup>

Lincoln was a product not only of his various environments, Kentucky, Indiana, New Salem, Springfield, and Washington, but also of the library. He worked out his mental salvation by contact with men in books, rather than with men in professor's chairs.<sup>3</sup> Tarbell in speaking of Lincoln said: "He had what schools exist to give, and so many succeed in stifling - - curiosity about men and life - - insatiable curiosity."<sup>4</sup>

1. Roy P. Basler, Abraham Lincoln: His Speeches and Writings, (Cleveland and New York, The World Publishing Company, 1945), 511. (Cited hereafter as Basler.)
2. Ibid, 549.
3. Louis A. Warren, Lincoln's Parentage and Childhood, (New York, The Century Company, 1926), 195. (Cited hereafter as Warren, Lincoln's Parentage and Childhood).
4. Ida M. Tarbell, In the Footsteps of the Lincolns, (New York and London, Publishers Harper and Brothers, 1924), 139. (Cited hereafter as Tarbell, In the Footsteps of the Lincolns).

## KENTUCKY

Thomas Lincoln exerted a positive influence upon his son's life. Many early biographers have led us to believe it was a negative influence. In 1918 Dr. Warren, who was an editor in Hodgenville, Kentucky, the town which was near Abraham Lincoln's birth place, felt early biographers placed too much dependence upon reminiscences instead of looking to public archives for documentary source material. Later he moved to Elizabethtown, Kentucky, the first home of Lincoln's parents. There he copied many court records and discovered that Thomas Lincoln was a land owner and not a constant roaming individual. Abraham Lincoln lived in but three homes before he was twenty-one. The farms purchased by Thomas Lincoln in Kentucky may not have been located in such desolate places. The birth place farm and the second property purchased by Thomas Lincoln were located on the Old Cumberland Trail between Louisville and the Cumberland River Country of Tennessee. It is possible slaves raised on Kentucky plantations traveled this road to the Southern markets and this had been witnessed by young Lincoln.<sup>1</sup>

The first signature of Thomas Lincoln, which has been discovered in Kentucky proved that five years before he married Nancy Hanks and eighteen years before he married Sally Johnson he was able to write his name. Evidently neither of his wives taught him his letters.<sup>2</sup> Nancy Hanks was

1. Louis A. Warren, "The Environs of Lincoln's Youth", Abraham Lincoln Association Papers, (Springfield, Illinois, 1933), 113-127. (Cited hereafter as Warren, "The Environs of Lincoln's Youth.")  
Louis A. Warren, "Dr. Louis A. Warren, Editor of Lincoln Lore," Lincoln Lore, (1948), No. 1000.
2. Louis A. Warren, Lincoln's Parentage and Childhood, 45.

illiterate and her signature has never been discovered. Whenever she had to sign a legal document she made a mark.<sup>3</sup> Lincoln once said of his father: "My father suffered greatly for want of an education and he determined at an early day that I should be well educated . . . . We had an old dog-eared arithmetic in our house and father determined that some how, or some how else, I should cipher clear through that book."<sup>4</sup>

While in Kentucky Abraham, past six, would probably listen to his father and mother talk about what the people were doing and what they learned from them. He probably heard, talking to his father, pioneers who were moving westward, politicians, soldiers who were returning home from the War of 1812, peddlers with wares, and land schemers. The tales they told of the outside world laid the foundations for his inquisitiveness. Lincoln did not live out of the current of history; he was always in it.<sup>5</sup>

Court records in Kentucky found by Dr. Warren picture Abraham Lincoln's father as an active respective citizen. Records show that Thomas Lincoln belonged to a branch of the Baptist church which had long been fighting slavery.<sup>6</sup> Lincoln said that his rather left Kentucky chiefly on account of difficulty with land titles. There is no evidence that these Kentucky farms were lost by any inability to pay for them. Thomas Lincoln in 1816

3. Albert J. Beveridge, Abraham Lincoln, (Boston and New York, Houghton Mifflin Company, The Riverside Press, Cambridge, 1928), I, 16. (Cited hereafter as Beveridge.)
4. M. L. Houser, Abraham Lincoln-Student, His books (Not for sale, 1932), 9. (Cited hereafter as Houser, Abraham Lincoln - Student.)
5. Charles Garrett Vannest, Lincoln the Hoosier, (St. Louis and Chicago, Eden Publ. House, 1928), 41-42. (Cited hereafter as Vannest.)
6. Tarbell, In the Footsteps of the Lincolns, 107-109.



decided to move to Indiana where the land was surveyed by the government.<sup>7</sup> Thomas Lincoln was not a "poor white". The "poor whites" through weakness, misfortune, fear, fell back in this frontier movement. They were often joined by convicts and pirates from the South Atlantic Colonies. The Lincolns and Hanks were of neither class. They moved forward and withstood the perils and the hardships of the early period.<sup>8</sup>

Lincoln was too young to attend school while he lived at the birth-place farm in Kentucky. There was a school, however, as it was attended by Dennis Hanks.<sup>9</sup> When Abraham Lincoln was four years old he attended his first school which was two miles from his home. His teacher was Zachariah Riney. It is said he went merely to accompany his sister Sarah.<sup>10</sup> Riney was a man of considerable culture, "a gentleman" who taught manners and morals in his school. He was a Catholic. At that time many fine, cultured people lived in a Catholic community at New Haven, eight miles from Lincoln's home, and at Bardstown, eighteen miles away.<sup>11</sup> Riney lived on a farm about two miles from the Lincolns. He lies buried at Gethsemane Abbey, three and one-half miles east of the present town of New Haven.<sup>12</sup> There is no way to ascertain the ability of Riney as a teacher.<sup>13</sup>

Abe was seven years old when he attended his next school which was taught by Caleb Hazel. This teacher was also his next door neighbor and a close friend of the family. Hazel was a member of the Little Mount

7. Warren, The Environs of Lincoln's Youth, 130.  
Basler, 548.

8. Tarbell, In the Footsteps of the Lincolns, 79.

9. Warren, op. cit., 123.

10. Warren, *ibid*, 126.

Warren, Lincoln's Parentage and Childhood, 200.

11. Vannest, 57-58.

12. Warren, The Environs of Lincoln's Youth, 126.

13. Warren, Lincoln's Parentage and Childhood, 210.

(Antislavery) church. He left the Old South Fork church because of the emancipation controversy. There is no doubt that he exerted an influence over Abraham Lincoln's childhood views about the rights and wrongs of slavery.<sup>14</sup> Slowly accumulating evidence proves that both Riney and Hazel were far better teachers than scant recorded material in Lincoln's biographies shows. Tarbell said, "The more we know of these two teachers, the more respectable they become."<sup>15</sup>

Abe's schooling in Kentucky amounted to at least three months.<sup>16</sup> He perhaps learned the alphabet and a few pages of Webster's Elementary Spelling Book and was able to write out the words he spelled.<sup>17</sup> When Abraham left Kentucky he had learned to read and spell. This was very unusual for there were few children his age, at that time, who had gained that much education.<sup>18</sup>

The scarcity of books in Kentucky, at the time when Abraham Lincoln's parents were residents of the state, has been exaggerated. By 1795 Lexington, Kentucky had established a library. In 1797 a book sale was held near Elizabethtown, and in 1811 one was held at Bardstown.<sup>19</sup> In May 1789 the Kentucky Gazette published in Lexington, ninety miles from the Lincolns, advertised for sale: Bibles, hymn books, spelling books, primers and writing paper. In 1793 in the same paper were advertised Horace, Virgil, Pope's Illiad, Paine's The Rights of Man, Ferguson's Astronomy, Nickolson's Philosophy and Blackstone's Commentaries.<sup>20</sup> Old account books

14. Warren, The Environs of Lincoln's Youth, 127.

15. Tarbell, In The Footsteps of the Lincolns, 107.

16. Beveridge, 29.

17. Varnest, 58.

18. Bess V. Ehrmann, The Missing Chapter in the Life of Abraham Lincoln, (Chicago, Walter M. Hill Publ., 1938), 63. (Cited hereafter as Ehrmann.)

19. Warren, Lincoln's Parentage and Childhood, 196.

20. Beveridge, 21.

of early store keepers indicate that Bibles, Latin books, histories, readers, and textbooks needed in the schools were available as early as 1806 in Elizabethtown. Paper by the quire and ink holders were sold as well as slates and slate pencils for children.<sup>21</sup> Books were not so plentiful, while the Lincolns were living in Kentucky, as they are now but they could be obtained. Of course Abraham was not then able to read these books, therefore they did not have a direct influence on the boy's life during the Kentucky sojourn; but the presence of good books would exert indirectly an influence upon the entire pioneer community to which his family belonged.

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21. Warren, Parentage and Childhood, 261-262.  
Louis A. Warren, "Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Lincoln at Home," Lincoln Lore, (1950), No. 1105.

## INDIANA

In the winter of 1816 when Abraham was eight (seven) years old, his father determined to move to Indiana.<sup>1</sup> In 1818 his mother died and in 1819 Sarah Bush became his stepmother. She encouraged Abraham to study, even though she could neither read nor write herself. She discovered that young Abe was a boy of uncommon natural talents. She influenced her husband to take the same attitude. She even helped do Lincoln's chores when he was engrossed in a book. After Mr. Lincoln's death she told William H. Herndon, Lincoln's law partner, that Thomas Lincoln, feeling the lack of his own education, encouraged Abraham to learn.<sup>2</sup>

Thomas Lincoln was a carpenter and he was good at his trade. In a court house at Rockport, Indiana there can be found a cupboard that is proof of his craftsmanship. Furniture at that time was largely made on the premises. Abraham was Tom's assistant and the many new settlers arriving into southwestern Indiana gave the Lincolns occasional employment.<sup>3</sup>

Records of Pigeon Creek Baptist Church show that Thomas Lincoln joined the church by letter June 7, 1823. One place in the book shows a subscription of corn. It seems certain Abraham Lincoln was a regular attendant but he never joined Pigeon Church.<sup>4</sup>

The log school houses of Indiana in which Lincoln attended school were as poor as were his teachers and their methods of instruction. The

1. W. D. Howells, Life of Abraham Lincoln, (Springfield, Abraham Lincoln Association, 1860), 21. (Cited hereafter as Howells.)
2. Charles H. Coleman, "Sarah Bush Lincoln, The Mother Who Survived Him," Lincoln Herald, (Harrogate, Tennessee, Summer 1952). Vannest, 47-48.
3. Tarbell, 132-133.
4. Ibid, 141-142. Beveridge, 71.

furniture was of the rudest kind; the benches were made of puncheon, greased paper was used for window panes. The schools had no maps, globes, charts or blackboards. The pupils had no slates. Paper was used and each pupil made his own "copy-work book" or "sum book". The ink was made from juices of berries. The pens were made of goose and turkey quills.<sup>5</sup> The schools were known as "Blab" schools. The pupils were compelled to study their lessons aloud for two reasons; first, so the teacher could see if each pupil was kept at work, and second, because of a scarcity of text books. The teacher read the lesson aloud and then the pupils would recite it after him. Through his entire life Lincoln read aloud as he had done in the "Blab" school.<sup>6</sup>

In Indiana, it is believed Lincoln attended different sessions of school, scattered over a period of years, the first when he was ten (eleven) years of age, the second when he was fourteen (thirteen) and third, when he was seventeen (fifteen). He went to school "by littles" and altogether for not more than a year. In his autobiography written in 1860, Lincoln said that he went to the following teachers: Andrew Crawford, Sweeney, and Azel W. Dorsey, but he couldn't remember any others. Mr. Charles Baker, editor of the Grand View, Indiana, Monitor, believes Mr. Lincoln had other teachers including James H. Brown, William Price, John Prosser, and John W. Crooks.<sup>7</sup>

Andrew Crawford, Lincoln's first teacher in Indiana, was a Justice of the Peace. This would indicate he had some qualifications above the average pioneer.<sup>8</sup> Andrew Crawford opened a school when there were enough children

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5. Vannest, 60.

6. Ibid., 58-59.

7. Ibid., 58.

Basler, 549.

8. Warren, The Environs of Lincoln's Youth, 15.

in the settlement to justify the starting of one. This school was located two or three miles from the Lincoln home. It was a subscription school. Skins and farm produce were used as money.<sup>9</sup> He is said to have taught etiquette or "manners" as the subject was then called, and he did this by practical demonstrations. A pupil would be asked to withdraw from the school room and then re-enter, being received at the door by one of the other members of the class. The guest was then escorted from bench to bench by the pupil acting as host and introduced to each one present.<sup>10</sup> Lincoln must have gone through this experience time and again and no doubt profited by it. People who knew him as a youth said that he was always thoughtful and courteous.<sup>11</sup> It was Andrew Crawford who made a copy of Weems' Life of Washington available to Lincoln.<sup>12</sup> In Trenton, New Jersey, Lincoln said: "Away back in my childhood, the earliest days of my being able to read, I got hold of a small book, . . . Weems' Life of Washington."<sup>13</sup> What Crawford taught Lincoln is not known, but probably simple reading.<sup>14</sup>

James Sweeney, Lincoln's second teacher in Indiana, taught school in a cabin on his father's property, which was about five miles from the Lincoln home. Three hours each day were consumed in going back and forth to the school. Abraham's attendance here was irregular and it is not likely he gained much.<sup>15</sup>

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9. Beveridge, 56.

10. Warren, The Environs of Lincoln's Youth, 134.

11. Vannest, 64.

12. Warren, op. cit., 135.

13. Ibid., 135.  
Basler, 574.

14. Beveridge, 56.

15. Warren, op cit., 137.

Azel W. Dorsey, Lincoln's third teacher, was the first coroner of Spencer County. He started a school four miles from the Lincoln home. His school was similar to that of Andrew Crawford except he did not try to 'learn manners' to the children. He gave out lessons from the Bible, Webster's or Dilworth's Spelling Book, Pike's Arithmetic, and a song book.<sup>16</sup> A manuscript book of arithmetic examples left by Lincoln is evidence that Dorsey was qualified to teach. This advanced training in mathematics was helpful to him when he later studied surveying. In 1828 Dorsey moved to Illinois and taught school in Schuyler County. His grave is near Rushville, Illinois.<sup>17</sup>

While in school Abraham read or had read to him the following books: Dilworth's A New Guide to the English Tongue, Webster's Old Blue Back Speller, Murray's English Reader, The Kentucky Preceptor, Barclay Dictionary, and Pike's Arithmetic.<sup>18</sup>

Dilworth's A New Guide to the English Tongue was a combination speller, reader, and grammar. The child that mastered it might be expected to spell correctly, read with some facility, have a good knowledge of elementary grammar, and be well grounded in primary ethics and religion.<sup>19</sup>

Webster's Old Blue Back Speller taught a little more science and less piety than Dilworth's work.<sup>20</sup> Spelling matches were held in the school nearly every day. Often during long winter evenings the neighbor-

16. Beveridge, 66.

17. J. B. Oakleaf, "Lincoln's School Teacher in Indiana Buried in Illinois," Journal Illinois State Historical Society, (Springfield, Illinois, Oct. 1929), 447-450.

18. Varnest, 12.

19. M. L. Houser: Young Abraham Lincoln and Log College, (Peoria, Illinois, Lester O. Schriver, 1942), 20. (Cited hereafter as M.L.Houser, Young Abraham and Log College.)

20. Houser, Abraham Lincoln Student, 10.



hood would gather at the school and have an old fashioned spelling match. Lincoln became a famous speller and was always the first one chosen in the contest. The spelling craze was given great impetus by Noah Webster's Blue Back Speller, which was widely used at this time all over the country.<sup>21.</sup>

Murray's English Reader contained both prose and verse. If Lincoln studied Dilworth and Murray and then took a post graduate course in grammar by studying Kirkham in New Salem, it is not surprising that Jesse W. Weik marveled at the grammatical accuracy of the thousands of documents that Lincoln left in the court records of the circuit.<sup>22</sup>

Readers were called "Preceptors". The Kentucky Preceptor contained some of the best selections in both English and American literature.<sup>23</sup> It was a serious grown-up book written down for young minds, but selected for the purpose of pulling up young minds to solemn and elevated thinking.<sup>24</sup> Lincoln used three other readers while in Indiana; Lowe's Columbian Class Book and Scott's Lessons in Elocution and Lessons in Reading. The time these were read cannot be positively determined. Scott's Lessons made a good general culture book. The book opens with short essays upon public speaking, the object of which should be to convey a precise idea. Scott urges simplicity and intelligence of gesture, distinctness of enunciation, right placing of emphasis, and pausing at the end of one sentence before beginning the next. There were other items concerning

21. Vannest, 62-63

22. M. L. Houser, Young Abraham and Log College, 26.

23. Ibid., 22.

24. Tarbell, 139.



the technique of delivery.<sup>25</sup> The book also contained literature and a course in good morals. The teaching of morals and patriotism was correlated with the teaching of grammar and rhetoric. Did these studies result in character building?<sup>26</sup> Readers during this period contained material of a varied nature. Some selections dealt with historical subjects, others with geographical subjects and others with natural science. There were lessons of love of country and many selections of a deep moral nature stressed fair play. Did these lessons remain with Lincoln and did they guide his later actions?<sup>27</sup> Lessons in Reading begin with five pages of maxims. It also contained brief selections from the classics, mostly fables and parables, essays on points of character and conduct, sketches of historical characters, excerpts from poems, and parts of famous speeches.<sup>28</sup> Four of these school readers, Murray's, Scott's, Lowe's and The Kentucky Preceptor contained a total of over 1,200 pages of fine print. Extracts, complete addresses and entire poems, all by masters of English and American literature were included. Authors represented were Dr. Johnson, Milton, Addison, Goldsmith, Pope, Gray, and John Adams. One section of the Scott book is devoted to such a Shakespearian gem as "Hamlet's Soliloquy".<sup>29</sup>

Those Lincoln biographers that have stressed Lincoln's ignorance probably have never been as well grounded in English literature as Lincoln was through his study of the "pieces" included in these readers.<sup>30</sup>

25. Beveridge, 75.

26. Louis A. Warren, "Scott's Lessons in Elocution", Lincoln Lore, (1946), No. 880.

27. Vannest, 62.

28. Beveridge, 75.

29. Houser, Abraham Lincoln Student, 10.

30. Houser, Ibid., 10.

Bailey's Etymological Dictionary was an important source book in the hands of a boy who had an ambition to learn.<sup>31</sup>

Arithmetic or ciphering held an important place in the school program. Since the teacher was the only one with a text the sums were dictated by him to the class and copied by the students in their "sum books". Abe Lincoln made his book out of paper about nine by twelve inches in size and sewed the leaves together with twine. Herndon saw several sheets of one of his "sum books" when he visited Lincoln's stepmother at Charleston, Illinois. On the lower left hand corner of one of the pages Lincoln had written the following doggerel:

Abraham Lincoln  
his hand and pen--  
he will be good, but  
God knows When.<sup>32</sup>

Any student who had mastered Pike's Arithmetic had an excellent foundation for the study of higher mathematics. This may have been the old dog-eared arithmetic that his father determined he should cipher clear through.<sup>33</sup> A fragment from a leaf of Lincoln's exercise book contains a problem in multiplication. The problem was written thus; "An army of a 1000 men having plundered a city took so much money that when it was shared among them each man has \$27. I demand how much money was taken in all." Lincoln solved the problem then proved his answer by

31. Louis A. Warren, "Bailey's Etymological Dictionary", Lincoln Lore, (1940), No. 594.

32. Vannest, 60-61.

Ida Tarbell, The Life of Abraham Lincoln, (New York, McClure, Phillips and Company, 1900), I, 42. (Cited hereafter as Tarbell, The Life of Abraham Lincoln, I)

Jesse W. Weik, The Real Lincoln A. Portrait, (Boston and New York, Houghton Mifflin Company, The Riverside Press, Cambridge, 1922), 22-23.

33. M. L. Houser, Young Abraham Lincoln and Log College, 24.

dividing the answer by 27. At the bottom of the page was written, "Abraham Lincoln His Book." By the time Lincoln was seventeen years of age he was a good penman.<sup>34</sup> Mr. Arnold, one of his early biographers said: "I have in my possession a few papers from his manuscript 'Book of Examples in Arithmetic'. One of these is dated March 1, 1826 and headed 'Discount' and follows in his careful handwriting: 'A definition of discount'; 'Rules for its computation'; 'Proofs and various examples' worked out in figures; then 'Interest on money' is treated in the same way, all in his own handwriting. I doubt whether it would be easy to find among scholars of our common or high schools, or any school of boys of the age seventeen a better written specimen of this sort of work, or a better knowledge of figures than is indicated by this book of Lincoln's written at the age of seventeen."<sup>35</sup>

The pioneer schools of Indiana held Friday afternoon exercise, consisting of declamations, oratory, and dialogues. At the close of the school year a general program was given. Lincoln liked to speak pieces, deliver orations, and take part in dialogues. He was the best debater in school. He often debated such questions as: "Resolved, that fire is more destructive than water" and "who has the greater right to complain, the negro or the Indian?" In his arguments he was clear and logical and often resorted to humorous remarks causing great merriment. By the time he was seventeen he was a "s tump speaker" of no mean ability. While working in the fields he would make so many speeches to the men that it

<sup>34</sup>. Tarbell, The Life of Abraham Lincoln, I, 31.

<sup>35</sup>. Isaac N. Arnold, The Life of Abraham Lincoln, (Chicago, Jansen, McClurg and Company, 1885), 25.  
Varnest, 61.

kept them from their work so much that his father was forced to break it up with a strong hand. In early Indiana schools a foundation for oratory and debating was built so well that in later life he met and conquered the ablest of all debaters of his day, Stephen A. Douglas and he delivered an oration, the Gettysburg Address, one of the greatest masterpieces in the English language.<sup>36</sup>

Early biographers failed to describe accurately the environments of Lincoln in Indiana. William Herndon, Lincoln's law partner, in a biography of Abraham Lincoln said:

It will always be a matter of wonder to the American people, I have no doubt - as it has been to me - from such restricted and unpromising opportunities in early life, Mr. Lincoln grew into the great man he was.<sup>37</sup>

Mr. Herndon did not know the whole truth about conditions in Southern Indiana. He had failed to secure facts from competent witnesses, like the office-holding class, doctors, lawyers, and judges.<sup>38</sup>

Mr. Lamon, another Lincoln writer, was mistaken about the character and the culture of the people of Southern Indiana with whom Lincoln grew to manhood. For example, he used the expression "lawyer named Pritchard" who "chanced to pass that way." This man was none other than the famous Judge John Pitcher of Rockport. Had Mr. Lamon known the Indiana environment of Lincoln he would have known about the lawyer's

36. Vannest, 63-64.

37. William H. Herndon and Jesse W. Weik, Herndon's Life of Lincoln, (New York, Albert and Charles Boni, 1889), 24-25. (Cited hereafter as William H. Herndon & Jesse W. Weik.)

38. Vannest, 511.

services.<sup>39</sup>

Beveridge described the people as ignorant, rough mannered, and superstitious. He described the cabins as being dirty and infested with vermin and the food consisting chiefly of flesh being fried in grease. The people consumed much liquor and did much fighting.<sup>40</sup>

Even Mr. William E. Barton failed to grasp the environment of Indiana when he wrote:

On this farm in the back woods in the Pigeon Creek settlement, with eight or ten families as neighbors, and with the primitive village of Gentryville a mile and half distant, Abraham Lincoln grew to manhood. Excepting for a brief experience as a ferryman on the Ohio River and a trip to New Orleans which he made upon a flat boat, his horizon was bounded by this environment from the time he was eight until he was twenty-one.<sup>41</sup>

To better understand life in southern Indiana between 1816 and 1830 "The Lincoln Inquiry" was started. People in this area were asked to write biographies of their pioneer ancestors. Two hundred and thirty-one of these biographies are filed with Miss Ann Page, curator of Central Library of Evansville, Indiana. This inquiry brought forth letters, documents, pictures and old newspapers. This history was valuable to the study of Lincoln's life. "The Lincoln Inquiry" accomplished much toward supplying what is called the missing chapter in Lincoln's biog-

39. Ward H. Lamon, Recollections of Abraham Lincoln, (Chicago, A. C. McClurg and Company, 1895), 13 ff.  
Vannest, 51 ff.

40. Beveridge, 50-53.

41. William E. Barton, The Soul of Abraham Lincoln, (New York, George H. Doran Company, 1920), 31.  
Vannest, 55.

raphy. It proved the unfairness and the misleading character of some early fiction. It showed a society under which a man of Lincoln's type, ambition, and curiosity could develop as Lincoln did.<sup>42</sup>

Lincoln is supposed to have said to Leonard Swett that he borrowed and read every book he could learn about within a radius of fifty miles. Mr. Swett may have indulged in some exaggeration for this would have included New Harmony, where Robert Owen's library was housed; Vincennes, the old capital with many private collections of books; Corydon, the state capital; in Kentucky, Hardinsburg, Hartford and Henderson; in Indiana, Evansville. It is more likely that a radius of twenty-five miles would take in all the territory into which Lincoln might have borrowed books. This territory would embrace the Breckenridge library at Boonville, the Pitcher library at Rockport and other private collections.<sup>43</sup>

Reading was the outstanding phase of Lincoln's life at this time. The boyhood home of Abraham Lincoln had the Bible, Pilgrim's Progress, and Aesop's Fables.<sup>44</sup> The Bible was used as a text-book in the schools when the pupils could read.<sup>45</sup> Mr. Lincoln had memorized many chapters of the Bible and had them at his command. Early in his professional life he learned that the most useful of all books to the public speaker was the Bible. After 1857 he seldom made a speech which did not contain Biblical quotations.<sup>46</sup> Fables of Aesop gave color to his love of

<sup>42</sup>. Ehrmann, 11-29.

<sup>43</sup>. William E. Barton, Abraham Lincoln and His Books, (Chicago, Marshall Field and Co., 1920), 14. (Cited hereafter as Wm. E. Barton, Abraham Lincoln and His Books.)

Louis A. Warren, "Lincoln's Background of Borrowed Books," Lincoln Lore, (1949), No. 1073, (Cited hereafter as Lincoln Lore, No. 1073.)

<sup>44</sup>. Wm. E. Barton, Abraham Lincoln and His Books, 7.

<sup>45</sup>. Ibid., 11.

<sup>46</sup>. Vannest, 133-134.



illustrative argument. Lincoln always kept the Bible and Aesop's Fables in reach and read them over and over. These two books furnished him the parables and figures of speech which he was to use later.<sup>47</sup>

Andrew Crawford, Lincoln's first teacher loaned him Weem's Washington. This was the first book that aroused his curiosity and interest in his country and a reverence for the great ideals for which it stood. While delivering an address at Trenton, New Jersey on February 21, 1861, Lincoln recalled his early reaction to a vital principle of our political science in the following words:

May I be pardoned if, upon this occasion, I mention that away back in my childhood, the earliest days of my being able to read, I got hold of a small book, such a one as few of the younger members have ever seen, "Weems' Life of Washington." I remember all the accounts there given of the battle fields and struggles for the liberties of the country, and none fixed themselves upon my imagination so deeply as the struggle here at Trenton, New Jersey. The crossing of the river; the contest with the Hessians; the great hardships endured at that time, all fixed themselves on my memory more than any single revolutionary event; and you all know, for you have all been boys, how these early impressions last longer than any others. I recollect thinking then, boy even though I was, that there must have been something more than common that those men struggled for.<sup>48</sup>

Ramsey's Life of Washington was also read by Lincoln. In 1826 Lincoln and his father assisted in building a cabin home for Josiah Crawford, who loaned Lincoln the book. This was the book that Lincoln placed in a crack in the wall and it became damaged during a shower. Abe secured possession of the book after doing some work for Crawford.<sup>49</sup>

47. Ehrmann, 11.  
Vannest, 65-69.

Wm. E. Barton, Abraham Lincoln and His Books, 11.

48. Basler, 574.

49. Lincoln Lore, No. 1073.

The first law book Lincoln read probably was Revised Statutes of Indiana owned by David Turnham, the constable in Gentryville, Indiana. His home was about one mile from the Lincoln home. This book contained the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution of the United States, the Act of Virginia passed in 1783 by which the territory "north westward of the Ohio River was conveyed to the United States," and the Articles of 1787 for governing this territory. These documents on which this country has been built and shaped may have impressed him greatly. There can be no doubt that Abraham Lincoln first read the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States either from a history book while attending the Indiana "blab" schools or from David Turnham's Revised Statutes of Indiana. This book is said to have given him his first insight into law and possibly encouraged him to make the decision to choose law as his profession. David Turnham also loaned him Scott's Lessons in Elocution and Sinbad the Sailor.<sup>50</sup>

The first law case recorded that contained the name of Abraham Lincoln was in Kentucky. He was charged with operating a ferry without a license by Dill brothers who were licensed ferryman. Lincoln defended himself and was acquitted by a justice as he showed that he never ferried any men across the Ohio but only to the middle of the stream to a steamer and that this did not require him to have a Kentucky license. Later he

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50. Vannest, 95-98, 83-85.

Lincoln Lore, No. 1073.

Ehrmann, 11.

Beveridge, 74.

Louis A. Warren, "Lincoln's Law Library", Lincoln Lore, (1941), No. 619.

Tarbell, In the Footsteps of the Lincolns, 146-147.



told this story to his Cabinet.<sup>51</sup>

From some source Lincoln secured Grimshaw's History of the United States, which listed notable events down to the inauguration of President James Monroe. The first chapter explained the advances made in astronomy, geography, and navigation. Then followed the discovery of America and the development of the colonies. The author bitterly condemned slavery. The book ended with the cessation of Florida to the United States; and as a climax the progress of literature, science, and art was described.<sup>52</sup>

Reverend J. Edward Murr, a Methodist preacher, lived near the scenes of Lincoln's youth and had known intimately many of Lincoln's friends and neighbors.<sup>53</sup> Murr claims Lincoln secured a copy of Grimshaw's History from William Jones at whose store, near the Lincoln home, Abraham sometimes worked. Lincoln did work for Jones. Jones may have retained the text books he used at Vincennes University and loaned them to Lincoln. He took the Louisville Journal that contained speeches of Clay. This newspaper was probably read by Lincoln.<sup>54</sup>

In Rockport, Lincoln borrowed books from a noted lawyer, John Pitcher. He was the first resident attorney at Rockport, Indiana, and later became prosecuting attorney of Spencer County. In a statement made sixty years later, Pitcher said that at an early date he had a good library of standard works and law books; These he both loaned Abraham books and advised him

51. Vannest, 78-79.

52. Beveridge, 73-74.

William. E. Barton, Abraham Lincoln and His Books, 11.

53. Ehrmann, 27, 83.

54. M. L. Houser, Young Abraham Lincoln and Log College, 30.

• Beveridge, 97.

• Ehrmann, 9-13.

regarding his studies.<sup>55</sup>

John A. Brackenridge was a brilliant lawyer at Boonville. Thomas Lincoln came in contact with this lawyer while doing jury service. A few years later Lincoln's son walked from the Spencer County home to Boonville to hear him plead a murder case. After the trial Abraham tried to congratulate him, but he was snubbed by Brackenridge. Later President Lincoln had a chance to congratulate him for his great speech.<sup>56</sup> John Brackenridge was greatly admired by young Lincoln. Eldora Minor Raleigh, a niece of Brackenridge has stated that Lincoln visited her uncle's home and that he read books on law and the works of Shakespeare, Burns and Byron. Wesley Hall, who was two years younger than Lincoln and whose father sometimes employed the Lincolns in his tanyard, has supported her testimony.<sup>57</sup> Bess Ehrmann also stated that Lincoln often walked twelve miles to Boonville to talk with Brackenridge and to borrow his books.<sup>58</sup> Some of the Brackenridge books were dated early enough to have been in the library when Lincoln is said to have visited it. This does not necessarily mean he read them.<sup>59</sup>

From the time Lincoln was fifteen or sixteen he was spending probably several months of every year away from home. His work among

55. M. L. Houser, Abraham Lincoln's Favorite Poem, Its Author and His Book, (Peoria, Illinois, Edward W. Meredith, 1935), 25. (Cited hereafter as M. L. Houser, Abraham Lincoln's Favorite Poem.)  
Ehrmann, 9-11.  
Varnest, 98.  
Beveridge, 77.  
56. Varnest, 5, 105-106.  
57. M. L. Houser, Abraham Lincoln's Favorite Poem, 5, 25.  
58. Ehrmann, 65-66.  
59. Lincoln Lore, No. 1073.

the neighbors gave him an opportunity to find out what books were to be had, to read some while employed, and to borrow others when he went home.<sup>60</sup> At the age of twenty-one when he left Indiana he had a knowledge of books and men. He reached Illinois educated far above the average pioneer. Why in 1860 did Lincoln ignore having these advantages? He probably had a keen appreciation of "the value of understatement."<sup>61</sup>

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60. M. L. Houser, Abraham Lincoln Student -- His Books, 11, 149-150.

61. M. L. Houser, Young Abraham Lincoln and Log College, 9-12.  
Basler. 511.

## NEW SALEM

The Thomas Lincoln family moved to Macon County in 1830. Abraham spent about a year with his parents. There he was employed by Denton Offut to build a flatboat and to make a trip to New Orleans. Offut then hired him to clerk in a store he started in New Salem. Abraham Lincoln reached New Salem in July and in August probably voted for the first time. Thomas said that Lincoln did not serve as clerk at this election.<sup>1</sup> Reep, in describing the election, stated that there was a delay in opening the polls because of the absence of one of the appointed clerks. At this time the ability to write legibly and to spell correctly was not a common accomplishment. Persons qualified to act as clerks of an election were scarce in frontier towns. Mentor Graham, a school teacher, was one of the clerks. Since Lincoln was going to be a clerk of the new store it is believed he was asked if he could write. Lincoln probably replied in his usual modest manner, "I can make a few rabbit tracks." According to Reep he was invited to be a clerk. He filled in the necessary blanks in the poll book and assisted the other clerks.<sup>2</sup> Josephine C. Chandler also stated that Lincoln assisted Mentor Graham as clerk of an election immediately on his return to New Salem following the trip to New Orleans.<sup>3</sup>

1. Benjamin P. Thomas, Lincoln's New Salem, (Chicago, The Lakeside Press, R. R. Donnelley and Sons, Company, 1934), 42-43. (Cited hereafter as Thomas.)
2. Thomas P. Reep, Lincoln at New Salem, (Petersburg, Illinois, The Old Salem Lincoln League, 1927), 20-21. (Cited hereafter as Reep.)
3. Josephine Craven Chandler, "New Salem: Early Chapters in Lincoln's Life," Journal of Illinois State Historical Society, (January 1930), XXII, No. 4, 513. (Cited hereafter as Chandler.)

While Lincoln was working in the store, Denton Offut bragged of Lincoln's mental and physical might to the Clary's Grove boys. These men were willing to concede Abe's intellectual superiority, but refused to recognize his physical superiority until he won a match with the Armstrong boys.<sup>4</sup>

On March 9, 1832, Lincoln issued "Address to the People of Sangamo County: Political Announcement" announcing his candidacy for state representative. His language and literary style was at this time similar to his style thirty years later.<sup>5</sup>

Lincoln's education was continued in New Salem through the influence of the books he read and the people with whom he associated.

William G. Greene was supposed to have given him help in his quest for knowledge. Greene was employed by Offut to tell Lincoln whom to credit, as Lincoln was not acquainted with the financial standing of the people in the community.<sup>6</sup> According to New Salem tradition Lincoln began the study of Kirkland's Grammar while clerking in Offut's store. He had Greene ask him questions from the book while he recited the answers and the definitions.<sup>7</sup>

During Lincoln's presidency, Greene, who was internal revenue collector for the Peoria district, was called to Washington by Lincoln. The following story was told by Greene when interviewed about 1893. After shaking hands with him, Lincoln turned to Seward and said, "Seward, shake

4. Thomas, 44-46.

5. Basler, 53-57.

Thomas, 51.

6. Reep, 23-24.

7. Thomas, 48.

hands with Bill Greene of Illinois, the man who taught me grammar."<sup>8</sup>

This statement embarrassed Greene, who knew little about grammar. He did not engage in the conversation for fear Seward would notice his deficiencies and wonder at Lincoln's statement. After Seward left Greene said, "Abe, what did you mean by telling Seward that I taught you grammar? Lord knows I didn't know any grammar myself - much less could I have taught you."<sup>8</sup>

Lincoln replied, "Bill, don't you recollect when we stayed in the Offut store in New Salem, that you would hold the book and see if I could give the correct definitions and accurate answers to the questions?"<sup>8</sup>

Greene said, "Yes, Abe, I remember that, but that was not teaching you grammar."<sup>8</sup>

Abe replied, "Bill, that was all the teaching of grammar I ever had."<sup>8</sup>

Rufus Rockwell Wilson described Greene in the editor's introduction of Ross's Lincoln's First Years in Illinois. He pictured him as thrifty and self-assertive. When he was called upon in after years to tell his relations with a man destined to greatness, he stoutly refused to hide his own light under a bushel.<sup>9</sup>

Mentor Graham helped Lincoln over many rough places in his study of grammar and mathematics.<sup>10</sup> It may have been Graham who suggested Kirkland's Grammar to Lincoln when he sensed Lincoln would be handicapped by his handling of English when placed with men of education. Modern teachers would probably laugh at this grammar. It was an excellent self-teacher.

8. Reep, 31.

9. Harvey Lee Ross, Lincoln's First Years in Illinois, (Elmira, N. Y., The Primavera Press, Inc., 1946), XXVIII, (Cited hereafter as Ross.)

10. Reep, 28.

Lincoln was able to make nouns and verbs agree and was able to handle "parts of speech" after studying it. A copy of this grammar owned by a descendent of James Rutledge was found in Dakota and placed in a Lincoln collection at Decatur, Illinois.<sup>11</sup>

Having mastered the rules and definitions of Kirkham's Grammar, he began to study mathematics. Mathematics had a lasting fascination for his analytical mind. In after years, while riding the circuit, he occupied his leisure by working out propositions in geometry. According to his own statement made in his autobiography written in 1860, he said, "He studied and nearly mastered the six books of Euclid since he was a member of Congress."<sup>12</sup>

John Calhoun, the county surveyor, wanted to appoint Lincoln his deputy. The two men had opposite political beliefs. Lincoln would not accept the appointment until he was assured he would not have to surrender his political beliefs or curb his right to express them. Then he borrowed books on surveying from Mr. Calhoun and asked Mentor Graham to help him over the difficult parts. At every spare moment from early morning until late at night he labored. In six weeks he believed he had mastered the books sufficiently to begin work.<sup>13</sup> In his autobiography written in 1860 he wrote, "He procured a compass and chain, studied Flint and Gibson a little, and went at it."<sup>14</sup> Howells said that Lincoln first used a grapevine instead of a chain. Lincoln did not correct this statement.<sup>15</sup>

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11. Tarbell, In the Footsteps of the Lincolns, 176-178.

12. Basler, 549.

Thomas, 48.

13. Reep, 61-62.

14. Basler, 551.

15. Howells, XIV.



If he did use a grapevine for a chain, his surveys could still be correct, for a grapevine would not shrink or expand to any noticeable extent and would do the work of a chain very well.<sup>16</sup> In the latter part of 1833 Lincoln secured employment. In those days when the country was rapidly filling with settlers and division lines of farms were being run for the first time, when speculators were buying large tracts, when towns were being established, and when wagon roads were being opened, surveying was an important and responsible job. On February 11, 1835, the State Legislature passed an act providing that county surveyors should be elected instead of appointed. Calhoun, who was running for the State Senate, was not a candidate. Thomas Neale was elected to succeed Calhoun, but Lincoln continued as deputy until 1836 or 1837. He surveyed New Boston, Bath, Albany, Huron, and Petersburg. Roads that Lincoln surveyed are still in use and the boundaries of many Menard and Mason County farms were run originally by him.<sup>17</sup>

An Act of January 1829 required each county surveyor to keep records of every survey. In the Sangamon County Recorder's office there are two volumes beginning in 1841; but if Lincoln ever kept such a book it has not been found.<sup>18</sup>

His reputation for skill and accuracy became such he was sometimes sent to settle disputes out of his territory. After he gave up surveying he was called upon by a group of surveyors, who had gathered in Springfield to settle a point in regard to the Act passed by Congress in 1805.

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16. Reep, 61-63.

17. Thomas, 68-74, 118.

18. Ibid., 117.



relating to surveys. Their selection was not based alone on the fact he was an able lawyer, but also that he had been a surveyor.<sup>19</sup>

Lincoln had always aspired to be a good speaker. In Indiana he had sometimes stopped work to deliver extemporaneous addresses to stumps. A debating club was organized at New Salem during the winter of 1831 and 1832 with James Rutledge as president. They held regular meetings and Lincoln was a regular attendant. Robert Rutledge, a son of James Rutledge, described Lincoln's first attempt to speak at this club:

As he rose to speak, his tall form towered above the little assembly. Both hands were thrust down deep into the pockets of his pantaloons. A perceptible smile at once lit up the faces of the audience, for all anticipated the relating of some humorous story, but he opened up the discussion in splendid style, to the infinite astonishment of his friends. As he warmed to his subject, his hands would forsake his pockets and would enforce his ideas by awkward gestures; but would very soon seek their resting place. He pursued the question with reason and argument so pithy and forcible that all were amazed.<sup>20</sup>

Through the activities of the Debating Society and Mr. Rutledge's interest in him, Lincoln continued to improve his education.<sup>21</sup>

Bowling Green, one of the first acquaintances of Lincoln at New Salem, had been elected Justice of the Peace. He possessed Statutes of Illinois and a few law books. Bowling Green found that Lincoln understood the meaning of legal expressions and terms. This knowledge had probably been gained through his study of the Statute Laws of Indiana previous to his coming to Illinois. Green loaned him books and encouraged

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19. Tarbell, In the Footsteps of the Lincolns, 201-202.

20. Reep, 31, -33.

21. Thomas, 47.  
Chandler, 525.

him to study.<sup>22</sup>

In 1832 Lincoln bought a book of legal forms and with this as an aid he drew up mortgages, deeds and other legal instruments for his friends. He never made any charge for these services.<sup>23</sup>

Major John T. Stuart probably had more to do in shaping the political destiny and professional life to Lincoln than any other one man. They first met and became friends during the Black Hawk War and kept up their friendship afterwards. Lincoln began the systematic study of law under his tutelage.<sup>24</sup> He borrowed books from Stuart and studied alone. At the same time he surveyed to pay his bills. At an auction in Springfield he bought a copy of Blackstone's Commentaries.<sup>25</sup> September 1836 Lincoln applied for a license to practice law and March 1837 the Supreme Court granted him a certificate of admission to the bar. April 1837 Lincoln left New Salem to become a law partner of John T. Stuart.<sup>26</sup>

Lincoln probably owed to Jack Kelso his introduction to the poetry of Burns and Shakespeare, and possibly the volumes of Paine and Volney.<sup>27</sup> During his leisure time he would study Shakespeare and Burns and go fishing with Jack Kelso who was well educated, a lover of nature, and who could "recite Shakespeare and Burns." From him Lincoln learned to appreciate and understand the finer sentiments and shades of poetical

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22. Reep, 53.

23. Thomas, 76-79.

24. Reep, 23.

25. Thomas, 76-77, 117.

26. Ibid, 88.

27. Chandler, 533.

expression.<sup>28</sup>

While practicing law, before his election to Congress, a copy of Burns was his inseparable companion on the circuit. It is said he memorized much of Burn's poetry. He was a student of Shakespeare and once said of him, "to know whom is a liberal education."<sup>29</sup>

Dr. Jason Duncan, a former New Salem doctor, sent Lincoln a newspaper clipping containing an anonymous poem correctly called, "Mortality," but which had been called "Immortality" or "Oh, why should the spirit of mortal be proud." Lincoln committed it to memory and adopted it as his favorite poem. Through out his entire life he often repeated it, sometimes for his own solace when he was melancholy and at other times for the entertainment of others. In 1865 there was published in Chicago a piece of sheet music with the following title:

Oh! Why Should the Spirit of Mortal Be Proud  
Poem by Abraham Lincoln, Late President of the  
United States  
Music by George C. Pearson.<sup>30</sup>

For twenty years, Lincoln unsuccessfully sought the name of the author. While at the White House he discovered that the poem had been published in 1824 by William Knox, a native of Scotland.<sup>31</sup>

Lincoln borrowed or picked up about New Salem copies of Volney's Les Ruins and Paine's Age of Reason. Paine's book assailed many of the Biblical narratives. One who read it was considered an infidel. His political opponents accused him of being one. People at that time were

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28. Reep, 54.

29. Howells, 31.

30. M. L. Houser, Abraham Lincoln's Favorite Poem, 5-6.  
William H. Herndon and Jesse W. Weik, 114.

31. M. L. Houser, Abraham Lincoln, Student -- His Books, 17.

intolerant. Because he was kind, gentle, considerate, and helpful his nonconformity to the dogmas did not affect his popularity. His reading of these works did not cause him to become a sceptic but gave him a broader and more tolerant view of religion.<sup>32</sup>

Lincoln not only read the Bible while in Indiana, but also read it while living at New Salem. The Rutledge Bible was donated to the Salem Lincoln League in 1918 by Sarah Rutledge Saunders, the youngest child of James and Mary Ann Rutledge. Mrs. Saunders stated, "I have heard my mother say, 'I have seen Lincoln read from this book more than once'."<sup>33</sup>

Because the bent of his mind was mathematical and metaphysical, he was pleased with the absolute and logical method of Poe's tales and sketches, in which the problems of mystery were given and wrought out into everyday facts by processes of cunning analysis. Each year he would read this author's works.<sup>34</sup>

As Postmaster of New Salem, he had the privilege of reading all newspapers that came to the office. At this time he formed the habit of reading newspapers and of interpreting public opinion through them. This he continued to do through the rest of his life.<sup>35</sup> To the office came the following newspapers: The Louisville Journal, The Cincinnati Gazette, The St. Louis Republican and Sangamo Journal.<sup>36</sup>

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32. Beveridge, 138-139.

. Reep, 55.

33. Ibid., 50.

34. Howells, 31-32.

35. Thomas, 67.

Reep, 57-61.

36. Chandler, 526.

In these papers he read Jackson's "Proclamation" which was written in 1832. Twenty-eight years later Lincoln used it as a model when he composed his "First Inaugural."<sup>37</sup>

Lincoln, while in New Salem, not only was trying to improve his own education, but also was recommending education for others. In his speech to the people of Sangamo County, March 9, 1832, during his first campaign for State Legislature, he said:

Upon the subject of education, not presuming to dictate any plan or system respecting it, I can only say that I view it as the most important subject which we as a people can be engaged in. That every man may receive at least, a moderate education, and thereby be enabled to read the histories of his own and other countries, by which he may duly appreciate the value of our free institutions, appears to be an object of vital importance, even on this account alone, to say nothing of the advantages and satisfaction to be derived from all being able to read the Scriptures and other works, both of a religious and moral nature, for themselves. For my part, I desire to see the time when education, and by its means, morality, sobriety, enterprise and industry, shall become much more general than at present, and should be gratified to have it in my power to contribute something to the advancement of any measure which might have a tendency to accelerate the happy period.<sup>38</sup>

Mr. Bullard said, "This was Lincoln's nearest approximation to a formal definition of education."<sup>39</sup>

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37. Beveridge, 131.

38. Basler, 56.

39. Bullard, F. Lauriston, "Abraham Lincoln and Henry Adams." Abraham Lincoln Association, Abraham Lincoln Quarterly, (Springfield, Illinois, March, 1941.), I., No. 5.

## SPRINGFIELD AND WASHINGTON

Books continues to contribute to Abraham Lincoln's intellectual advancement after he left New Salem. By the time he went to Washington his law library had grown to about two hundred volumes. Following his marriage he probably read many religious books, as most of his wife's family were devout church members. Jesse W. Fell presented him a complete set of Channing's Works. It is believed that Lincoln found much in Channing's dissertations, on both religion and politics with which he agreed. He also read Parker's Speeches, Addresses and Occasional Sermons. Dr. Parker was very liberal in his religious views and later was virtually excluded from the Unitarian fellowship. Much has been written concerning Lincoln's study of Smith's The Christian Defense.<sup>\*</sup> This book contained the addressed which Dr. Smith made during a debate with an "infidel" in Mississippi. While pastor of the church in Springfield, which the Lincolns attended, he loaned Lincoln a copy.<sup>1</sup>

Of the works in natural science that Lincoln studied were Chamber's Vestiges of Natural History of Creation and Well's Annual of Scientific Discovery. Chambers' book was a forerunner of our theory of evolution and taught that creation came through natural laws which work out the purposes of Divine will. Lincoln was so well pleased with Well's work he bought all the volumes then published.<sup>1</sup>

1. M. L. Houser: Abraham Lincoln Student - His Books, 13-33.

M. L. Houser: Education of Abraham Lincoln, 35-40.

\* following a title indicates that Mr. Lincoln's own copy is yet extant.

Of the philosophical works he studied there can be named Bacon's Essays, Wealth and Worth,\* Mill's On Liberty, Burke's A Philosophical Inquiry into . . . the Sublime and Beautiful,\* and Chandler's The Elements of Character.<sup>1</sup>

The books on politics and government were of great value to him. Clay's Life and Speeches of Henry Clay\* furnished him with political ammunition; Elliott's Journal and Debates of the Federal Convention was serviceable to him while he was preparing his Cooper Institute speech; Hickey's Constitution of the United was used while he worked on his First Inaugural Address; French's The True Republican\* was used by him as a political reference work; Beecher's Narrative of the Riots at Alton\* and Sumner's The Republican Party\* furnished him with arguments against slavery; Fitzhugh's Sociology for the South enabled Lincoln to get the view-point of the better class of Southern people regarding slavery, the Abolitionists and the rights of the States; and Gilmore's Among the Pines gave him an understanding of conditions, prejudices, and aspirations of the people of the far South.<sup>1</sup>

In a letter to General McClellan, Mr. Lincoln said that he had read nearly all of the important works on military science then extant. The biographers have mentioned Halleck's Military Art and Science and Lincoln, himself, in a political speech indicated that he was familiar with Scott's Abstract of Infantry Tactics. Brown University has an original letter in which Lincoln thanked John Callan for a copy of Callan's Military Laws of the United States.<sup>1</sup>

Biography interested Abraham Lincoln but he did not like to have

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1. Ibid.



men over-praised. In 1856 Herndon purchased a Life of Burke. After reading it Lincoln criticized it as magnifying perfections and suppressing imperfections.<sup>2</sup> In later years Mr. Lincoln is known to have read Wirt's Sketches of the Life . . . of Patrick Henry, Burke's Public and Domestic Life of Edmund Burke, Holland's Life of Martin Van Buren, Drake's Life of Black Hawk,\* Flint's The First White Man of the West\* and Thayer's The Pioneer Boy.\* In 1863 the publishers of Thayer's Pioneer Boy presented Mr. Lincoln with a specially bound copy. Under Thayer's name on the title page, apparently written by some member of the Lincoln family, was the notation, "The Champion Liar of History."<sup>3</sup>

Abraham Lincoln read almost no fiction. He said to Frank B. Carpenter, "It may seem strange to say, but I never read an entire novel in my life."<sup>4</sup> He read passages of chief English authors of fiction. He once tried to read Ivanhoe and did not finish it.<sup>5</sup>

Shakespeare's Dramatic Works\* always remained his favorite book of verse. Burn's Poetical Works was his second choice.<sup>6</sup> Lincoln liked Longfellow's poetry and committed certain passages to memory, quoting them on numerous occasions. He liked to recite poetry to his friends. On numerous occasions he would take down a volume of Knox, Burns, Byron or Hood and read aloud.<sup>7</sup>

2. William E. Barton, Abraham Lincoln and His Books, p. 13.

\* following a title indicates that Mr. Lincoln's own copy is yet extant.

3. Houser, Abraham Lincoln, Student - His Books, 13-15.

4. Wm. E. Barton, *op cit.*, 15.

5. Wm. E. Barton, *ibid.*, 15.

6. M. L. Houser, *op cit.*, 17.

7. David J. Harkness, "Lincoln Liked Longfellow," Lincoln Herald, (Harrogate, Tennessee, Summer 1952), 21-25.



During the trying periods of the war he found relaxation by reading works of humor, both to himself and to others. Some of these were Halpine's Life and Adventures . . . of Private Miles O'Reilly, Newell's The Orpheus C. Kerr Papers, Browne's Artemus Ward: His Book,\* Mitchell's Fudge Doings. He derived his greatest pleasure from David R. Locke, who, as Petroleum V. Nasby, wrote the Nasby Letters. Mr. Lincoln sent word to Locke that for the genius to write as that author did, he would gladly exchange his office.<sup>8</sup> Lincoln told stories in personal arguments and in jury trials, but almost never told a story in a formal address.<sup>9</sup>

Records have been found that show that in 1861 and 1862, Mrs. Lincoln purchased three groups of books for the executive mansion library. There were sixty-six titles, comprising over one hundred volumes. This purchase included poems, history and natural science. Later a set of Waverly, a set of Cooper, and a set of Shakespeare were purchased. These books were available to Lincoln from their time of purchase to the day of his death.<sup>10</sup>

The outstanding fact concerning Abraham Lincoln's education stated in the words of John Finley is: "It did not stop with the school, nor with learning to read and write, nor even with his professional studies; instead, he kept on growing till the sudden end of his life."<sup>11</sup>

8. M. L. Houser, Abraham Lincoln, Student - His Books, 24.

\* following a title indicates that Mr. Lincoln's own copy is yet extant.

9. Wm. E. Barton, Abraham Lincoln and His Books, 18.

10. Louis A. Warren, "The Lincoln's Executive Mansion Library," Lincoln Lore, (December 12, 1949), No. 1079.

11. John H. Finley, "The Education of Abraham Lincoln," Lincoln Centennial Association Papers, (Springfield, Illinois, 1925), 90.

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